

CHILD SAFETY REPORTING OBLIGATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES – LOG CABIN CAMP

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our camp community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to Log Cabin Camp. The specific procedures that are applicable at our camp are contained at **Appendix A**.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all camp staff, and camp community members. It also applies to all staff and campers engaged in any camp-run events, activities, and services.

POLICY

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests.

Log Cabin Camp understands the important role our camp plays in protecting children from abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Grooming

The staff at Log Cabin Camp are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations.

At Log Cabin Camp we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our camp and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

Mandatory Reporting

The following occupations are mandatory reporters under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic):

- registered medical practitioners
- nurses
- midwives
- registered teachers and early childhood teachers
- school principals
- school counsellors
- police officers
- out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- registered psychologists
- people in religious ministry.

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse, and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Log Cabin Camp to be aware that they are **not** legally obliged to make a mandatory report to **Child Protective Services (DFFH)** on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection however as an organisation we would **strongly encourage reporting** even if the Camp Manager does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

Child in need of protection

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

For more information about making a report to DHHS Child Protection, see Advisory Guide: [Child Protection – Making a Report](#)

At Log Cabin Camp we also encourage all staff to make a referral to <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/> when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. Orange Door also have a physical office in Ballarat.

Reportable Conduct

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has formed a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child;
- significant neglect of a child; or
- misconduct involving any of the above.

Log Cabin Camp, **has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)** when an allegation of reportable conduct is made against a child **by a staff member in their organisation**.

Organisations subject to the [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) are legally required to notify the Commission of allegations of reportable conduct against a child or young person **by a staff member in their organisation**. Log Cabin Camp must notify CCYP within three days of the head of the organisation becoming aware of a reportable allegation and should use CCYP's [secure webform](#).

Our Camp Manager **must** notify The Commission for Children and Young People of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former staff, contractors, volunteers (including parents), or allied health staff.

If camp staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions (inside or outside of the workplace), they should notify the Camp Managers immediately. If the allegation relates to the Camp Managers they should notify Child Safe Champions.

Failure to disclose offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (ie persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over. Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed, for example, through a mandatory report to DHHS Child Protection.

Failure to protect offence

This reporting obligation applies to camp staff in a position of authority. This can include **Camp Managers, Activities Manager and Child Safe Champions**. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their camp (such as an employee, contractor or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include removing the adult (ie persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police. If a camp staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

[RELATED POLICIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION](#)

Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

Policy status and review

Camp Managers are responsible for reviewing and updating the Policy at least every two years.

Approval

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Created date | 16/1/23 Beth Oswin |
| Consultation | Grant and Christine Laidlaw |
| Endorsed by | Grant Laidlaw, Camp Manager |
| Endorsed on | 16/1/23 |
| Next review date | 16/1/24 |

APPENDIX A

CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCEDURES AT LOG CABIN CAMP

For campers

• All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.

Managing disclosures made by campers

When managing a disclosure you should:

- listen to the camper and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
 - be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
 - do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
 - reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
 - use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
 - tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you").

When managing a disclosure you should **AVOID**:

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the child to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

General procedures

Log Cabin Camp will follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (Four Critical Actions) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

All staff at our camp who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting or the staff member is not a mandatory reporter, should in the first instance, speak to a member of the Management team or should make the required reports to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as necessary.

At our school the Camp Managers will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

Reporting suspicions, disclosures or incidents of child abuse

Responsibilities of all camp staff

If a camp staff member reasonably suspects or witnesses an incident of child abuse or receives a disclosure of child abuse, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and call 000.
- Speak to a member of the Management team as soon as possible, who will follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure. It is recommended to use the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the camps locked file.
- If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must ensure that a report to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police has been made by a member of the Management team. If the report has not been made by another staff member, the staff member should make the report.
- If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child, they must ensure that a report to Victoria Police has been made by a member of the Management Team. If the report has not been made by another staff member, the staff member should make the report.

In circumstances where a member of the leadership team disagrees that a report needs to be made, but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection and/or has been the victim of sexual abuse, the staff member must still contact DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to make the report.

Responsibilities of member of the Management Team

The member of the Management Team is responsible for promptly managing Log Cabin Camps response to an incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the incident, suspicion or

disclosure is taken seriously. The member of the Management Team is also responsible for responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse. If the member of the Management Team receives a report from a staff member or member of the community of a suspicion, disclosure or incident of child abuse, they must:

- Follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) as soon as possible, including:

- o **Responding to an emergency**

- o **Reporting to authorities/referring to services**

- o **Contacting parents/carers and**

- o **Providing ongoing support.**

- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including actions taken, it is recommended to use the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the student's locked file. They are also responsible for ensuring that any staff member who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion to them also makes and keeps notes of the incident.

If the Management Team responsible above is unavailable, the Child Safe Champions will take on the role and responsibilities described in this section.

Duty of care and ongoing support for campers

Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to children. All staff must ensure that a member of the Management Team or other appropriate staff member is aware of any incidents, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible after they occur. This will allow appropriate supports to be put in place for the child affected.

For camp visitors, contractors and camp community members

All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations – see Failure to disclose offence above, in this Policy.

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see the [Four Critical Actions](#)

There is no requirement for community members to inform the camp if they are making a disclosure to DHHS Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the camp, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the Management Team so that appropriate steps to support the child can be taken.